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## Preparing for the Future: Strategic Planning and Leadership in Special Collections

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## Using Common Vendors ... from page 28


have selected online for possible later purchase. The database indicates actions taken in real time, using **YBP** further increases the potential for coordination by providing selectors with this information close to the time a book is published or becomes available for acquisition.

This domestic vendor decision resulted in creating a common universe of English-language monographs that encompassed relevant domestic and foreign publishers in the emerging global English-language academic book market, while dramatically reducing the time and effort required to find out what consortial partners were doing. The shared database also indicates decisions as soon as libraries or **YBP** takes any action. Such timely knowledge, coupled with the use of email and the quick responses this medium typically gets, allows the Africana selectors at **UNC** and **Duke** to coordinate cooperative collection development for specialized or expensive purchases down to the level of individual titles on a comprehensive and on-going basis. The **UNC** Africana bibliographer selects **YBP** titles online from its **Gobi2** database. By checking the consortial status box to the right of the bibliographical record he can review at a glance what actions have been taken by selectors at **Duke** and **NCSU**.<sup>6</sup>

Using the same vendor for English-language books published or distributed in the U.S. and U.K. also has resulted in extending ad hoc cooperative collection development for Africana beyond the formal agreements between the main libraries at **UNC** and **Duke**. The Africana bibliographers can now easily see what the branches and separately administered health science and law libraries on both of their campuses are acquiring as soon as an action is registered in **YBP**'s database. Although **NCSU** is not part of this cooperative program, its acquisitions can also be con-

sidered when the **UNC** and **Duke** Africana bibliographers make their selection decisions. This de facto expansion of the libraries involved has further decreased unneeded duplication and, through such dollar savings, has correspondingly increased the number of unique titles available to users within the local consortium.

In conclusion, these vendor-based programs at **UNC** and **Duke** have enhanced the possibilities for systematic and ad hoc cooperation, in-

creased precision in coordinated acquisitions, and improved the complementarities of their combined collections. By that process, they have provided greater assurance that each library is meeting its cooperative obligations. By maximizing the number of specialized monographs collectively available and minimizing the chances of needed books not being held locally, the libraries provide better service to patrons and enhance institutional excellence. 

### Endnotes

1. On the history and development of this cooperation, see Patricia Buck Dominguez and Luke Swindler, "Cooperative Collection Development at the Research Triangle University Libraries: A Model for the Nation," *College & Research Libraries* 53 (1993), p. 470-96.
2. Hans M. Zell's, *The African Publishing Companion: A Resource Guide* (Lochcarron: Hans Zell Publishing Consultants, 2002), provides the most up-to-date and comprehensive overview of publishing and bookselling in Africa. A continuously updated version is available to purchasers of the print volume at <http://www.africanpublishingcompanion.com/>, while a new published edition is scheduled to appear in 2004. For the situation in countries with English as the official language, see *Book Chain in Anglophone Africa: A Survey and Directory* (Oxford: International Network for the Availability of Scientific Publications, 2002), which is also available in its entirety free at <http://www.inasp.info/pubs/bookchain/profiles/>.
3. The overview section on the UNC-Chapel Hill Libraries' Website located at <http://www.lib.unc.edu/cdd/crs/international/afri/overview.html> provides a list and map of the divisions of primary responsibility by African countries in general and a copy of the current joint approval plan profile for African publications specifically.
4. Although the focus of this article is on sub-Saharan (black) Africa, **UNC** and **Duke** librarians built on a success in the mid-1990's of a joint approval plan with the Library of Congress regional acquisition offices for South Asia. They subsequently decided to use the LC Cairo Office as their primary vendor for north (Arab) Africa. They wrote complementary profiles for this part of the continent in terms of subjects and levels of coverage in order to create cooperative collections of African imprints for their nascent Middle Eastern Studies programs. Incidentally, this joint approval plan for South Asia, which includes nearby North Carolina State University, represented the first and remains the only such one with the LC regional acquisitions offices.
5. All libraries, including those in Africa, face the same problems. For a recent report on the obstacles faced by a library trying to get publications from even its own African country, see H. K. Raseroka, "The Acquisition of African Published Material by a Library in a Developing Country," *African Research & Documentation* 72 (1996), p. 45-53. In addition, African libraries also rely on the same U.S./U.K. distributors to get indigenous imprints. Raseroka, p. 47, and John Pinfold, "Acquiring Books from Southern Africa: A Librarian's View," *Focus on International & Comparative Librarianship* 27, no. 2 (1996), p. 55-6.
6. While this article centers on the experience of research institutions using vendors to enhance ad hoc cooperation, such approaches are potentially relevant to all libraries. See, for example, Rob Kairis, "Tools for Small Colleges: Using Yankee Book Peddler to Facilitate Cooperative Collection Development," *Library Collections, Acquisitions & Technical Services* 27 (2003), p.173-78.

## Preparing for the Future: Strategic Planning and Leadership in Special Collections

by **Roland Barksdale-Hall** (Adjunct Faculty, Clarion University School of Library Science) <best@surf724.com>

**A**frican-American collections at **Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs)**, in spite of a longstanding history of limited and unequal funding, were birthed, survived, some might even say blossomed, in the adverse climate of nineteenth-century **Jim Crow**. Donations from prominent bibliophiles provided the core of these nascent African-American collections. Some special collections, including those at **Howard Fisk**, **Tuskegee**, and **Hampton**, stand as a tribute to the library leaders of the past and their dogged

determination to chronicle the notable accomplishments of people of African descent. The work of **Dr. Dorothy Porter Wesley** (1905-1995) and her contemporaries (Waller, 2003, p.17) are evidence of exemplary collection development. According to **Charles L. Blockson**, curator of the **Charles L. Blockson** Collection, "**Dr. Wesley** transformed **Howard's** collection of black culture into an internationally known treasure." Thanks to the effort of these early bibliophiles and library pioneers, African-American



Collections at **HBCUs** remain a national, in some cases international, treasure.

In the twenty first century, information professionals will be challenged to answer persistent questions regarding these special collections; 1) What role, if any, will the African-American collection play in advancing

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the teaching and learning mission of the HBCU? 2) How will these collections grow and be preserved during times of financial constraint? 3) What will be the significance of these collections in times of technological advancement? Library leaders will be required to implement strategic plans that address all of these issues. It is crucial to develop collection management policies that build upon the parent institution's strategic plan and overall mission, to address the vulnerable condition of pre-1900 material, and to use advanced technology that will ensure access to the legacy of Black history, literature and art to future generations of scholars.

Susan Jurow (1990, p.59) has identified five competencies employed by acknowledged library leaders: 1) vision; 2) communication; 3) trust; 4) risk; and 5) empowerment. Basic skills required by middle-management librarians to address these serious issues will include leadership, an understanding of preservation and information technology, as well as participation in professional associations. Higher leadership roles will require comprehensive planning skills on the policy level, including decision-making and multi-leveled problem solving (Barksdale-Hall, 2002, p.48).

### Review of the Literature

Norlin (2001, p. 190) has proposed that one strategy for leadership development is a record of involvement in national professional library organizations, such as the **Black Caucus of the American Library Association (BCALA)**, **American Library Association (ALA)**, **Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL)**, and the **African American Studies Librarians' Section of ACRL (AFAS)**. The literature records that there is low involvement in national professional library associations and information technology by HBCU librarians (Norlin, 2001, p.187, 195). Irene Owens (2001, p. 178) notes the dedication of librarians in her review of the literature; however she acknowledges a lack of "in-depth analysis" of HBCU libraries and leadership development. Judy Reynolds (1996, p.208) provides 50 leadership development ideas which special collections librarians can adopt.

In recent times, Owens provided a historical context for understanding the development of library services and limited (unequal) resources which contributed to the growth of African-American collections at HBCUs. While the development of "outstanding collections" on Black literature, history and art of people of African descent at HBCUs was laudable, the circumstance of underlying racism, which produced the "separate but equal" library facilities, were not. (For more on library services during segregation, see John Mark Tucker, *Untold Stories: Civil Rights, Libraries, and Black Librarianship*. Champaign, IL: Publications Office, Graduate School of Library and Information Science, 1998).

### Strategic Planning

According to G. Edward Evans et al., "[T]he term strategic planning has a military origin, and that in organizational management its meaning relates to how an organization plans to respond to its environment... The environment is in a constant change; ... therefore, thinking ahead about how to respond to possible changes is prudent management..." (2000, p.179).

G. Edward Evans et al. (2000, p. 162) outlined three fundamental components of the planning process: 1) Planning is anticipatory in character. That is, it focuses on what needs to be done, not what was done. 2) Planning is a series of related decisions — if this happens, do "X;" if this does not happen, do "Y;" 3) Planning looks to the future and requires that one make some assumptions and predictions.

### Forecasting

What are the implications for HBCU libraries and African-American collections, in particular, if administrators focus more upon information literacy and leadership development in the future? *The Black Caucus of the American Library Association Newsletter*, October 2003, reports a collaborative initiative between the **Southern Library Network (SOLINET)** and the **HBCU Library Alliance**. Formed in October 2002, the Alliance strives to: 1) ensure excellence in HBCU libraries through the development, coordination, and promotion of programs and activities; 2) enhance members' collections and services; 3) identify the leadership skill set required by HBCU librarians; and 4) integrate their libraries more effectively into their institutions' teaching and learning missions (p.32). The partners are the recipients of a one-year planning grant, funded by the **Andrew W. Mellon Foundation**, aimed at developing library leadership. According to SOLINET, the stated project goals include strengthening components of information literacy and developing "the leadership skills and activities of libraries on campus."

The requirement for libraries to enhance the teaching and learning mission of the parent institution will not only build upon the traditional role of gatekeeper but place special collections librarians in an even more visible role as teachers of information literacy. What strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) will exist in this dynamic teaching and learning rich environment (Nelson, 2001, p.51)?

In the fall of 1980, Wendell L. Wray (1926-2003), then professor at the School of Library and Information Science, **University of Pittsburgh**, and Jeff Jackson, then head of the Afro-American Collection at Hillman Library, **University of Pittsburgh**, circulated a letter of interest in regard to the formation of a Discussion Group in ACRL to focus on Black Studies. The letter established their intent to organize a "formal group... in which librarians who are engaged in work in the field of Black Studies can meet and discuss the problems which [were] common to them in this area." They initially identified a list of

discussion topics that included: 1) status of collections; 2) resource sharing; 3) reference services; 4) bibliographic control; 5) mechanized information; 6) retrieval; 7) integrated vs. separate collections; 8) interdisciplinary nature of collections; 9) archival materials; 10) retrospective collecting and purchasing; 11) selection policies and procedures; and 12) oral history. Many of these topics remain "as relevant today as they were [more than] twenty years ago," according to Dr. Stanton F. Biddle in an address at the **ALA ACRL AFAS Twentieth Anniversary Program**, held at the Westin St. Francis Hotel, San Francisco, California, June 16, 2001.

However, because strategic planning requires one to make assumptions and predictions about the future, this author offers a personal list of future issues: 1) information technologies will be in high demand; 2) strong library leadership skill sets will be sought; 3) conservation and preservation will be required as African-American collections continue to age; 4) financial constraints will persist; 5) cooperative teaching and learning projects will be encouraged; and 6) resource sharing and new formats will be required to meet high demands for information.

### Cooperative Learning

Special Collections librarians have assisted, often from a distance, in enhancing the educational mission of the parent institution in past times. Administrators, faculty, staff and students alike traditionally have looked to special collections as a "treasure chest of knowledge" when answers were needed about an historical consciousness and identity. However, given today's changes in the market, where competency in information literacy, and the ability to locate, evaluate and utilize information is a requirement, Special Collections librarians will be required to, in addition "provide instruction in information literacy skills" (Norlin, 2001, p. 188). Basic information literacy skills will include: 1) problem solving; 2) designing the question; 3) formulating a search strategy; and 4) identifying, evaluating and utilizing both print and non-print resources.

One out of every four African-Americans who earned a bachelor's degree in 1994 was a HBCU graduate (Norlin, 2001, p. 186). If current enrollment trends persist, Special Collections librarians will possess an opportunity to assist in providing the next generation of Americans with not only a historical identity but also marketable skills in a competitive economy.

### Conclusion

Special collections librarians must accept the challenge to ensure that African-American collections grow and prosper into the future because these collections must be interpreted for a new generation. Cooperative teaching and learning programs on the campuses of HBCUs will need to be explored. Finally, participation in national professional library associations will advance the power and influence of librarians at HBCUs to help shape the landscape of librarianship. 